

Claims

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for sharing costs associated with toll calls comprising:
    - a) providing toll sharing parameters for a toll call between parties;
    - b) receiving toll call indicia sufficient to determine costs associated with a toll call; and
    - c) apportioning the costs for the toll call between the parties based on the toll sharing parameters.
  - 15 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising generating billing information for each party including apportioned charges for the toll call.
  - 20 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing step further includes receiving information sufficient to define the toll sharing parameters for the toll calls between the parties and defining the toll sharing parameters to apply to the toll calls between the parties.
  - 25 4. The method of claim 3 further comprising determining whether to apportion costs for the toll call based on the toll call indicia and wherein the apportioning step is applied when the costs associated with the toll call should be apportioned
  - 30 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the determining step further includes determining if the toll call is between the parties for which the toll sharing

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6. The method of claim 5 wherein the determining step further includes determining if the toll call falls within the toll sharing parameters such that only costs for calls between the parties and falling within the toll sharing parameters are apportioned.
7. The method of claim 3 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring after the toll sharing parameters are defined.
8. The method of claim 3 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring within a defined period of time.
9. The method of claim 8 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring on or within at least one of the group consisting of time of day, day, week, month, and year.
10. The method of claim 3 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to at least one portion of the toll call.
11. The method of claim 3 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to at least one portion of the toll call having a defined length.

12. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

- a) receiving a request from an originating one of the parties to apportion costs for the toll call;
- 5 b) effecting a query to a terminating one of the parties to accept apportioned costs for the toll call;
- c) receiving a response to the query from the terminating one of the parties; and
- 10 d) determining if the terminating one of the parties is willing to accept apportioned costs for the toll call based on the response to the query.

15 13. The method of claim 12 further comprising facilitating interaction with the originating one of the parties to provide the toll sharing parameters for the toll call.

20 14. The method of claim 12 further comprising facilitating interaction with the terminating one of the parties to provide the toll sharing parameters for the toll call.

25 15. The method of claim 12 wherein the request is a code dialed by the originating one of the parties configured to initiate cost sharing for the toll call.

30 16. The method of claim 12 wherein the request is made via operator assistance to initiate cost sharing for the toll call.

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17. The method of claim 1 wherein the toll call indicia is received from a carrier facilitating the toll call.

5 18. A system for sharing costs associated with toll calls comprising a control system adapted to:

a) provide toll sharing parameters for a toll call between parties;

10 b) receive toll call indicia sufficient to determine costs associated with a toll call; and

c) apportion the costs for the toll call between the parties based on the toll sharing parameters.

15 19. The system of claim 18 wherein said control system is further adapted to generate billing information for each party including apportioned charges for the toll call.

20 20. The system of claim 18 wherein said control system is further adapted to receive information sufficient to define the toll sharing parameters for the toll calls between the parties and define the toll sharing parameters to apply to the toll calls

25 between the parties.

21. The system of claim 20 wherein said control system is further adapted to determine whether to apportion costs for the toll call based on the toll call

30 indicia and apportion the costs for the toll call when the costs associated with the toll call should be apportioned between the parties.

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22. The system of claim 21 wherein said control system is further adapted to determine if the toll call is between the parties for which the toll sharing parameters are defined such that only costs for calls between the parties are apportioned.
23. The system of claim 22 wherein said control system is further adapted to determine if the toll call falls within the toll sharing parameters such that only costs for calls between the parties and falling within the toll sharing parameters are apportioned.
24. The system of claim 20 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring after the toll sharing parameters are defined.
25. The system of claim 20 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring within a defined period of time.
26. The system of claim 25 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring on or within at least one of the group consisting of time of day, day, week, month, and year.
27. The system of claim 20 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to at least one portion of the toll call.
28. The system of claim 20 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to at least one portion of the toll call having a defined length.

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29. The system of claim 18 wherein said control system is further adapted to:

- 5 a) receive a request from an originating one of the parties to apportion costs for the toll call;
- b) effect a query to a terminating one of the parties to accept apportioned costs for the toll call;
- 10 c) receive a response to the query from the terminating one of the parties; and
- d) determine if the terminating one of the parties is willing to accept apportioned costs for the toll call based on the response to the query.

15 30. The system of claim 29 wherein said control system is further adapted to facilitate interaction with the originating one of the parties to provide the toll sharing parameters for the toll call.

20 31. The system of claim 29 wherein said control system is further adapted to facilitate interaction with the terminating one of the parties to provide the toll sharing parameters for the toll call.

25 32. The system of claim 29 wherein the request is a code dialed by the originating one of the parties configured to initiate cost sharing for the toll call.

30 33. The system of claim 29 wherein the request is made via operator assistance to initiate cost sharing for the toll call.

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34. The system of claim 1 wherein the toll call indicia is received from a carrier facilitating the toll call.

- 5 35. A computer readable medium including software for sharing costs associated with toll calls, the software comprising computer instructions to:
- a) provide toll sharing parameters for a toll call between at least two parties;
  - 10 b) receive toll call indicia sufficient to determine costs associated with a toll call; and
  - c) apportion the costs for the toll call between the parties based on the toll sharing parameters.

15 36. The computer readable medium of claim 35 further comprising instructions to generate billing information for each party including apportioned charges for the toll call.

20 37. The computer readable medium of claim 35 further comprising instructions to receive information sufficient to define the toll sharing parameters for toll calls between the parties and define the toll sharing parameters to apply to toll calls between the parties.

25 38. The computer readable medium of claim 37 further comprising instructions to determine whether to apportion costs for the toll call based on the toll call indicia and apportion the costs for the toll call when the costs associated with the toll call should be apportioned between the parties.

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39. The computer readable medium of claim 38 further comprising instructions to determine if the toll call is between the parties for which the toll sharing parameters are defined such that only costs for calls between the parties are apportioned.

40. The computer readable medium of claim 39 further comprising instructions to determine if the toll call falls within the toll sharing parameters such that only costs for calls between the parties and falling within the toll sharing parameters are apportioned.

41. The computer readable medium of claim 37 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring after the toll sharing parameters are defined.

42. The computer readable medium of claim 37 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring within a defined period of time.

43. The computer readable medium of claim 42 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to any toll calls occurring on or within at least one of the group consisting of time of day, day, week, month, and year.

44. The computer readable medium of claim 37 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to at least one portion of the toll call.

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45. The computer readable medium of claim 37 wherein the toll sharing parameters are defined to apply to at least one portion of the toll call having a defined length.

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46. The computer readable medium of claim 35 further comprising instructions to:

- a) receive a request from an originating one of the parties to apportion costs for the toll call;
- 10 b) effect a query to a terminating one of the parties to accept apportioned costs for the toll call;
- c) receive a response to the query from the terminating one of the parties; and
- 15 d) determine if the terminating one of the parties is willing to accept apportioned costs for the toll call based on the response to the query.

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47. The computer readable medium of claim 46 further comprising instructions to facilitate interaction with the originating one of the parties to provide the toll sharing parameters for the toll call.

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48. The computer readable medium of claim 46 further comprising instructions to facilitate interaction with the terminating one of the parties to provide the toll sharing parameters for the toll call.

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49. The computer readable medium of claim 46 wherein the request is a code dialed by the originating one of the parties configured to initiate cost sharing for the toll call.

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50. The computer readable medium of claim 46 wherein the request is made via operator assistance to initiate cost sharing for the toll call.
- 5 51. The computer readable medium of claim 35 wherein the toll call indicia is received from a carrier facilitating the toll call.
52. A method of sharing a cost of a toll call between an  
10 originating party and a terminating party:
- a) generating a toll sharing agreement between the originating and terminating parties to apportion the cost of the toll call according to defined parameters;
  - 15 b) determining the cost of the toll call; and
  - c) apportioning the costs of the toll call among the originating and terminating parties according to the defined parameters.
- 20 53. A method for sharing costs associated with toll calls comprising:
- a) receiving a request from a terminating party to apportion costs for a toll call with an originating party;
  - 25 b) providing toll sharing parameters for the toll call;
  - c) receiving toll call indicia sufficient to determine costs associated with a toll call; and
  - 30 d) apportioning the costs for the toll call between the parties based on the toll sharing parameters.